

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05
CIAE-00 INRE-00 PM-03 DODE-00 SP-02 L-01 PRS-01
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O 301345Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2266

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 04501

LIMDIS
C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (FOR TEXT)
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR IN
SUBJECT: FOREIGN POLICY OF NEW GOVERNMENT : USG POSTURE

1. THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S FIRST FORMAL STATEMENT ON
FOREIGN PLICY -- INCLUDED IN THE ACTING PRESIDENT'S
ADRESS TO PARLIAMENT -- WAS CONSIDERABLY MORE CAUTIOUS
THAN REMARKS MADE BY MORARJI DESAI IN HIS PRESS
CONFERENCE HERE AND IN HIS INTERVIEWS WITH TIME AND
NEWSWEEK. AS REPORTED IN NEW DELHI 4388, THE
PRESIDENT SAID THAT INDIA WOULD FOLLOW A POLICY OF
"GENUINE NONALIGNMENT AND THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD
MAINTAIN THE COMMTIMENTS OF THE PREVIOUS ONE. THE
PRESIDENT SEEMED TO BE SAYING THAT INDIA WOULD ESTABLISH
A BETTER BALANCE IN ITS RELATIONSHIPS AMONG GLOBAL POWERS
BUT NEVERTHELESS IT WOULD NOT REPUDIATE THE 1971 TREATY
WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

2. DURING THE COURSE OF A LONG CONVERSATION WITH ME ON A
NUMBER OF SUBJECTS ON MARCH 28, FOREIGN SECRETARY JAGAT
MEHTA UNDERTOOK TO BE EVEN MORE CAREFUL REGARDING THE
MEANING OF THE PRIME MINSTER'S REMARKS ON FOREIGN
POLICY. MEHTA, WHO HAD HAD HIS FIRST DICUSSIONS
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WITH FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE DURING THE PREVIOUS
TWO DAYS, SPOKE OF THE DANGER THAT DIFFERENCES IN
NUANCE IN INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY MIGHT BE MISTAKEN FOR
MAJOR CHANGE. HE SAID IN FACT HERE HAD BEEN NO BASIC
CHANGE AND WARNED AGAINST EXAGGERATION OF WHAT WAS
TAKING PLACE. HE SAID THAT FOREIGN POLICY WAS NOT
AN ISSUE IN THE ELECTIONS AND INDIA WOULD BE BASICALLY

CONTINUING ITS PRESENT POLICY OF NONALIGNMENT. HE OBSERVED THAT INDIAN HAD ALREADY BEEN GRADUALLY CHANGING ITS OUTLOOK -- HE USED THE TERM "NUANCE" AGAIN -- IN ACCORDANCE WITH CHANGES IN ITS INTEREST. THE NEW GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, MAY FIND IT EASIER TO "IDENTIFY" THIS CHANGE. IT WILL "ASK NEW QUESTIONS". IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE AT PRESENT TO INDICATE JUST WHAT THE CHANGE WILL BE. MEHTA DID AGREE THAT THE TERM "GENUINE NONALIGNMENT" REPRESENTS THE CHANGE IN NUANCE HE WAS TALKING ABOUT.

3. MEHTA ALSO SPOKE OF THE SOVIET REACTION TO THE ELECTION RESULT SAYING THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD NEVER BEEN CRITICAL OF JAGJIVAN RAM AND HAD BEEN MORE CAREFUL ABOUT THEIR COMMENTS ON THE JANATA PARTY IN THE LATTER PART OF THE CAMPAIGN. HE SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE USSR WOULD "VOICE SERIOUS PRIVATE APPREHENSIONS" IN ITS OFFICIAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOI. MEHTA ALSO SAID THAT INDIA WOULD GIVE PRIORITY TO GOOD RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. HE SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT INDIA DID NOT INTEND TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE OBVIOUS CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE INDIAN AND PAKISTANI ELECTIONS BUT WOULD SEEK GOOD RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN WHATEVER ITS FORM OF GOVERNMENT. MEHTA ALSO SAID THAT FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE WAS AWARE OF (AND APPARENTLY INTENDED TO COUNTERACT) THE APPREHENSIONS OF CERTAIN NATIONS ABOUT HIS INCUMBENCY. MEHTA WAS PROBABLY REFERRING TO SOME OF VAJPAYEE'S PREVIOUS POSITIONS ON PAKISTAN AND PERHAPS, THE MIDDLE EAST. CONFIDENTIAL

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4. I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY OF MY CONVERSATION WITH THE FOREIGN SECRETARY TO MAKE A BROAD REVIEW OF US FOREIGN POLICY ON THE BASIS OF THE PRESIDENT'S UN ADDRESS, AS UPDATED BY MORE RECENT OFFICIAL US STATEMENTS. I ALSO REVIEWED WITH THE FOREIGN SECRETARY US POLICIES IN SOUTH ASIA AS SET FORTH SO WELL BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY DUBS BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIA AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS OF THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE. MEHTA WELCOMED THE DUB'S STATEMENT, SAYING IT SHOWED UNDERSTANDING OF THE INDIAN APPROACH TOWARD A STABLE AND

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2267

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 4501

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COOPERATIVE SOUTH ASIA AND INDIA'S DESIRE TO SEEK TO
RESOLVE SOUTH ASIAN PROBLEMS BILATERALLY. HIS ONLY ELABORATION
WAS THAT THE RESOLUTION OF PROBLEMS REQUIRES MUTUAL ACCOMMODATION.
I REMARKED TO MEHTA THAT US POSITIONS AT THE MAR DEL LA PLATA
CONFERENCE HAD BEEN CONSISTENT WITH THE DUBS STATEMENT AND HE
INDICATED SATISFACTION WITH THE CONFERENCE OUTCOME.

5. IT IS APPARENT THAT IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME FOR THE NEW GOVT
TO SORT OUT EXACTLY WHERE IT STANDS IN ITS RELATIONS WITH GLOBAL
POWERS AND THAT DIALOGUE BETWEEN CONTINUING OFFICIALS AND NEW
MINISTERS WILL BE PART OF THIS PROCESS. IT SEEMS CLEAR, HOWEVER,
THAT SOME CHANGE IN THE BALANCE OF INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE MAJOR
POWERS IS IN STORE. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THAT CHANGE IS
NEW AND SUBSTANTIAL AS HAS BEEN IMPLIED BY THE PRIME MINISTER
OR IS MARGINAL AND A PART OF A PROCESS UNDER WAY FOR SOME TIME
AS THE FOREIGN SECRETARY IS SAYING. I SUSPECT THE PRIME MINISTER
MAY NOT HAVE BEEN FULLY AWARE OF THE RECENT TRENDS IN INDIAN
FOREIGN POLICY WHEN HE MADE HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND THAT THERE-
FORE MEHTA'S ANALYSIS MAY NOT BE FAR OFF THE MARK.

6. FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE WELL FOR THE
US TO WAIT FOR THE GOVT TO DECIDE
WHAT POLICIES IT WISHES TO PURSUE WHILE WE SHOW OUR FRIENDSHIP
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AND SYMPATHY FOR THE NEW GOVT AS WE HAVE DONE IN THE WHITE HOUSE
STATEMENT ON THE ELECTION, THE PRESIDENT'S WARM MESSAGE TO THE PRIME
MINISTER, AND THE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER
(A MORE HELPFUL POSITION ON IDA WOULD BE ANOTHER USEFUL GESTURE).
WE HAVE, FOR SOME TIME, REDUCED OUR PROFILE IN INDIA AND LOOKED

TO THE GOI TO INFORM US OF THE RELATIONS IT DESIRED AND THE RESULT
OF THIS STANCE HAS BEEN A GRADUAL AND STEADY IMPROVEMENT IN RE-
LATIONS UNCOMPLICATED BY FLUCTUATIONS. A NEW SITUATION NOW EXISTS
BUT AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT I BELIEVE IT BEST THAT WE HOLD TO THIS
POSTURE. THE NEW GOVT WILL EXPECT SOME RESPONSE FROM THE US
BUT WE SHOULD NOT OFFER ANYTHING OF SUBSTANCE UNTIL IT HAS HAD
AN OPPORTUNITY TO TELL US ABOUT ITS DESIRES. THERE ARE STILL
THOSE IN THE BUREAUCRACY AND SOME IN THE NEW GOVT WHO ARE SENSITIVE
TO WHAT THEY SEE AS THE DANGER OF US INTRUSION IN INDIA.
FURTHERMORE, WE SHOULD AVOID EXCITING INDIANS EXPECTATIONS WITHOUT
FIRST BEING SURE THEY CAN BE FULFILLED. IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE
THE GOVT WILL BE FULLY PREOCCUPIED WITH THE NON-ALIGNED COORDINATING
COMMITTEE MEETING HERE NEXT WEEK. WE SHOULD HAVE A BETTER IDEA
OF GOI POLICIES THEREAFTER AND BE ABLE TO MAKE A BETTER JUDGMENT
AS TO WHETHER ANY NEW LEADS ON OUR PART ARE IN ORDER
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